Species-appropriate keeping of mice requires a lot of time and a thorough knowledge of the individual needs of these active and inquisitive animals.

In brief
- **Life expectancy:** two to four years.
- **Mice are active day and night.**
- **Where to get them:** Give a nice new home to mice from an animal sanctuary or rescue centre. From an animal welfare standpoint, purchasing from a pet store or other commercial source is not an option!
- **Their skeleton is soft and fragile, so they are unsuitable for children.**
- **Keeping:** These highly social animals must be kept in small groups.
- **Breeding:** Mice are already capable of breeding when just three to four weeks old. Breeding should be prevented by keeping female-only groups or by neutering males.
- **Scent:** Mice mark their territory with urine and faeces.
- **Time:** Looking after mice takes a considerable amount of time, and should not be underestimated.
- **Allergies:** Mouse hair and bedding can trigger allergies in humans.
- **Holidays:** Before you get mice, make appropriate arrangements as to where and how they will be looked after when you go away on holiday.
- **Costs:** There are always costs involved in keeping animals, including the enclosure and its equipment, food, bedding and vet fees.
- **Mice are not cuddly toys!**

**Creating the right habitat**
The enclosure or cage should be in a quiet and bright place, away from draughts, heat sources, and cigarette smoke. Mice are sensitive even to minor variations in temperature or humidity. As it is largely unrealistic to allow mice to run free, their enclosure will need to be big enough to allow these inquisitive creatures enough freedom to satisfy their need for exploration and movement. The cages sold in stores are inadequate. Two mice will need an enclosure of at least one square metre.
Mice require plenty of ventilation at all times, so use only wire cages or enclosures. Suitable equipment includes different levels, sleeping huts, nesting materials (hay, kitchen paper), tubes (wood, cardboard, earthenware), digestible twigs or branches (for gnawing), hemp ropes, ladders etc. To keep the enclosure interesting for the mice, change the layout and equipment from time to time.

**Accessories that do NOT satisfy animal welfare standards:** hamster balls, tube systems made of plastic, hamster wadding, exercise wheels that have spokes or rungs, or that are open on the side of the frame and axle.

**Above:** For bedding, ordinary pet litter made of wood chips is suitable.

**Centre:** Mice have a very fragile skeleton and are therefore unsuitable for children.

**Below:** There should be a hiding place for every mouse.